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BIOGRAPHY
OF A
PIONEER MANUFACTURER



Clara L. Crane
1884.

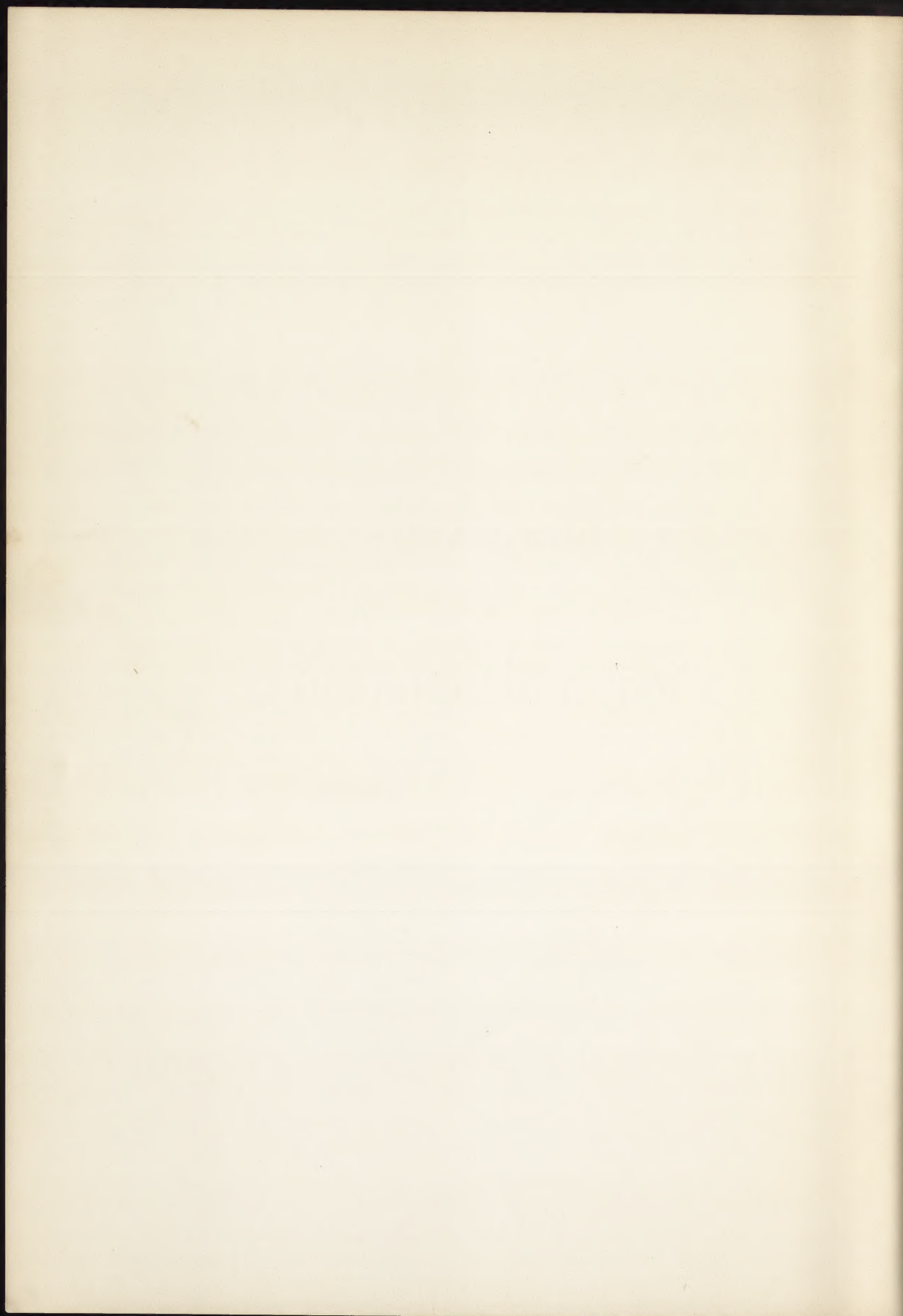
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Printed for Private Circulation.

Miss Clara L. Crane
Dalton
Mass.



BIOGRAPHY
OF A
Pioneer Manufacturer.



ZENAS CRANE,

DALTON, MASS.,

1799.







Lucas Crane

About 18 yrs old
when portrait was
painted.

PIONEER PAPER-MAKING
IN BERKSHIRE.

LIFE, LIFE WORK AND INFLUENCE OF
ZENAS CRANE.

"The first step is half the journey :
It is the first step that costs."

By J. E. A. SMITH,
Author of "The History of Paper Making," Etc.

From the 1874

1884

CLARK W. BRYAN & COMPANY, PRINTERS,
HOLYOKE, MASS., AND NEW YORK CITY.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

OF

Zenas Crane,

THE PIONEER PAPER MANUFACTURER OF
BERKSHIRE COUNTY, MASS.

THE story of an enterprising young man of good character, just entering upon business life, buoyant with youthful hope and inspired by an honorable ambition, is of universal interest. It must be a very dreary and selfish heart that does not vividly sympathize with his

“ Dream of doing

And the other dream of done,

The first glow in the pursuing,

The first joy in the begun,

First recoil from incompleteness in the face of what is won.”

And this, although the adventurer is only setting out upon a beaten track, and we well know the obstacles and the advantages which it may present to him. But, if he is venturing into

new paths, or into regions which are yet pathless, if he is inventing a new art or craft, or carrying the old into regions where it has not before penetrated, and whose fitness for it is untried, then a new element of interest is added to his story, and a deeper curiosity is aroused as to the denouement. The pioneer becomes to us in some sort a hero, and we look to see if he has in him those qualities which are essential to success in such venturous advances, daring, guided by the shrewdest caution, thorough knowledge of all that can be preknown of the difficulties he is to encounter, quickness of apprehension, ready ingenuity, and aptness of expedient to meet sudden emergencies; and, withal a mind continually on the alert, and under perfect self-control.

The pioneership which pushes old arts and trades into new fields now lacks, with us, very much the charm of adventure. Thanks to numberless official and unofficial explorers and statisticians, every part of the American Union is so well known to every other, and experiments in newly locating manufactures have been so frequent, that the result of another attempt may be calculated in advance with great exactness, by men of information and judgment.

It was far otherwise in the early years of the present century. The establishment of a new manufactory at any point upon this continent was then deemed, not a common-place affair, but a hazardous experiment; to be urged and hailed by orators and newspapers as a patriotic act; one that required heroic purpose and daring. Eighty-five years ago, the little territory comprised in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts was less within the reach of the merchant seated in his counting-room at Boston than the "whole boundless continent," nay, the whole civilized world, now is. A manufacturer in the Berkshire valley can to-day receive and respond to, an order for his goods from San Francisco with greater ease and promptitude than his predecessor in 1800 could have done, had the call come from the metropolis of his own state. But, as a matter of fact, in 1800 there were in all the territory of Massachusetts and New York between the Connecticut and the Hudson rivers, no manufactories except a few rude iron furnaces, and potasheries, tanneries and fulling mills which, although numerous were small, of the simplest construction and, except the iron, of the coarsest product. The waterfalls, now so busily employed that they demand large reinforcement from the then

almost unknown power of steam, then, for the most part dashed on in idle play; the lakes, whose waters are now treasured up by costly dams, were counted by the agricultural population as so much waste surface.

There were few manufactories of any kind in all America; but, prominent among them, were paper mills which had sprung up in various parts of the country—principally in Pennsylvania and other Middle States, with perhaps fifteen of them, of small capacity, in Eastern Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island.

Such was the state of the paper and other manufactories of New England and other parts of America, when in the summer of the year 1799, Zenas Crane, a young paper-maker, set out from Worcester, Mass., westward, to prospect for a site upon which to establish himself in business. We will attempt a brief sketch of his life both before and after that date.

Zenas Crane was born at Canton, Norfolk County, Mass., May 9, 1777, being the son of Stephen and Susannah (Babcock) Crane. His father's home was in that corner of Canton, which is now closely embraced by the boundaries of Dedham, Hyde Park, and Milton. Hyde Park,

*Susannah Babcock's home is still standing 1926
at 362 Adams St. Milton Mass, with date 1753 on chimney.*

now a place of small territory but filled with the residences of gentlemen doing business in Boston, was taken from three older towns ; that portion adjoining Canton being in 1777 a part of Milton. The Blue Hills, Punkapoag Lake, Neponset river, and many fine smaller streams render the whole region one of great natural beauty, which was early recognized by the cultured and wealthy citizens of Boston, from which it is only ten or fifteen miles distant ; and in colonial times several of the most noted had country houses here. Among them was Thomas Hutchinson, the Royal Governor and the historian of the Province, whose summer residence was at Milton Hill. We mention these facts, not only as describing the youthful home of the subject of this sketch, although that would of itself give them interest for us, but because they have a direct and definite bearing upon our whole story.

In the year 1730, Daniel HENCHMAN, an enterprising bookseller of Boston, having received some encouragement from the General Court, built, at Milton, the first paper mill in New England, and in 1731 exhibited to his august patrons some creditable specimens of its work. After a few years, it ceased operation from lack of a

skilled workman. The year 1760, however saw it revive, "a citizen of Boston" having obtained for a British soldier stationed there a furlough long enough to enable him to put the mill in operation and initiate some person or persons into its mysteries. Hutchinson was at this time assiduous to ingratiate himself with his countrymen, as well as with the English government, which in its turn was anxious to bind him to its interests. It was probably his influence which obtained the favor of the furlough, so contrary to the ordinary repressive policy of the home government towards colonial manufactures.

The rescued manufacture flourished, although for many years upon a small scale, and was an object of public interest, for we find this quaint announcement in the *Newsletter* of 1769:

"The bell-cart will go through Boston, before the end of next month, to collect rags for the paper mill at Milton, when all people that will encourage the paper manufacturing may dispose of them.

Rags are as beauties that concealed lie,
But when in paper, how they charm the eye;
Pray save your rags, new beauties to discover,
For paper truly every one's a lover.
By pen and press such knowledge is displayed
As wouldn't exist, if paper was not made.
Wisdom of things, mysterious, divine,
Illustriously doth on paper shine."

When, in 1775, the war of the revolution began to reduce the colonists to dependence upon their

own resources for manufactured goods, the product of three small mills was all the paper which Massachusetts could contribute to the general supply. Connecticut and New York could do a little better than this; but the other colonies less, and most of them nothing at all. A paper famine ensued, and, to relieve it, what mills there were, were forced beyond their capacity—sent out paper only half made, and that half badly. Housewives had not learned to save their rags; and, as there was therefore great scarcity of raw material, the General Court urged this economy upon them as a patriotic duty, and ordered the Revolutionary committees to appoint persons in their respective towns to receive rags and forward them to the mills. But the supply was still short, and in the haste of working them up, as they were ill-sorted, the queer colors which variegate the newspaper files of that era still bear witness. As the war, and its necessities continued, experience and better systematized management brought some improvement in the manufacture, but the scarcity continued, and with it, the public solicitude for the welfare of the mills. The attention thus attracted to them was, of course, most intense in the places where they were located; and, there at least, the interest was not diminished

when the peace of 1783 permitted the introduction of foreign papers without fear of hostile cruisers or restriction by protective tariffs. The sections—then few and of limited extent—in which manufactures had sprung up and been fostered by the war saw their local interest endangered by foreign competition, and clung to them with new ardor.

While this feeling was at its height, the home of Stephen Crane was on the banks of Punkapoag brook just above its junction with Neponset river; and just below that junction stood the Milton Paper Mill; so that nothing could be more natural than the attachment to the paper manufacture with which his sons, Stephen, Jr., and Zenas, grew up. But how many remote, often trivial and apparently unconnected, circumstances contributed to the building up near their cottage of the business which created that attachment, gave direction to their lives as well as those of their descendants, and laid the foundation of their fortunes, and of substantial benefits to distant communities; how many acts of statesmen and movements of armies which looked not to them or their affairs, as well as incidents in the lowly life of far-a-way villages over the sea, combined to transform two raw New England

country lads into paper manufacturers, and secure the results which have followed. Doubtless, a similar train of causes go to give direction to every life which has any well defined direction at all; but this instance, by the clearness with which its steps can be traced, affords a striking illustration of the rule, and gives it peculiar value. The ambitious and courtly Hutchinson, obtaining a little favor for a new manufacturing enterprise near his county seat, neither foresaw nor cared for its effects upon the children of his humble neighbor Crane or their descendants; nor could he have piqued himself as sole benefactor if he had, for quite as indispensable a link in the chain of circumstances of which we have spoken, was the chance enlistment of a poor but skillful paper-maker by a British recruiting sergeant. We may guess the story where the record fails us, for it was one but too common in the good old days of Britain. A young paper-maker—very likely in the region of Maidstone in the English county of Kent,—perhaps disappointed in love or unsuccessful in business; perhaps transferred from the meshes of the dram-seller to those of Sergeant Kite—becomes a soldier and is sent across the waters to fight the French and Indians. Chance delays his regiment awhile

in Boston; chance reveals his skill in an art which sadly needs a teacher in that neighborhood; chance gains him permission to supply that need:—chance, or shall we give it another name? At any rate, the lost art is recovered by his instructions. Then he marches away with his fellows, whether to die, a hero, with Wolfe on the Plains of Abraham, or to return home, and as a hero recover his lost love or forfeited position, no man knows. But the result of his brief sojourn and work at Milton, we do know, for it has continued with ever increasing and extending force for more than a century. Surely a passing tribute to the memory of that poor unknown man is not out of place here.

Stephen Crane, Jr., having learned the paper-maker's trade in the mill at Milton, established himself at Newton Lower Falls. It does not appear that Zenas had any definite instruction before he left his Canton home in the art and mystery which became his business for life; but it goes without saying that a bright lad could not have lived so near a peculiarly interesting and fascinating manufacture without gaining at least a tolerably accurate general notion of it. And it was fitting that the pioneer paper-maker of Western Massachusetts should be inspired

with a desire of his life-work by the pioneer paper mill of New England.

At any rate when the time came for him to choose his employment for life, he repaired to his brother at Newton, and in his mill acquired the rudiments of his business. He then went to Worcester and completed his knowledge of the art in the mill of General Burbank. Mr. Burbank was a severe and exacting master, but very competent, and Zenas Crane profited both by his skill and his discipline. That he learned his trade well all his subsequent life shows ; and in no part of it was this, as well as his sound quick judgment, more conspicuous than in the first steps which he took after attaining his majority.

Naturally of an independent disposition, his first thought was to look out for a proper location in which to set up a mill for himself. There were several requisites to be considered in making such a selection ; some of them different from what would now be demanded. There must be water power sufficient to drive the engine, but easily controllable, the purest water in abundance for cleansing the rags and preparing the pulp, cheap land, and a surrounding region which would afford provisions at low prices, as well as a good supply of rags,

and, after they were manufactured, a market for a considerable portion of the product. Much of this is now changed. The home market has become of small consequence. Most of the materials for the Crane and other large establishments of this country are brought from the ends of the earth, and their paper is sent to the markets of the World. Now each mill can select its own specialty, and perfect itself in the skill and machinery needful for it, sure of somewhere finding a sale for the best goods which can be made. Unfortunately for the early manufacturers, the reverse of this was true long after 1801. Then each little mill gathered its rags from a small circuit of country immediately around itself; and, depending largely upon the same region as a market for its goods, made so far as it had the means and skill, all the different qualities of writing, printing and wrapping paper, as that region happened for the moment to demand. The proprietors were glad to turn their hands to anything which would pay, however much frequent changes hindered general progress. Paper-makers shared this difficulty with other American manufacturers. It was, or was supposed to be, a necessity of the times; but it was a disadvantage nevertheless,

and, as we shall see, only one of many which the early paper-makers in this country had to encounter.

It was with a full knowledge of all this that, in the summer of 1799, Zenas Crane set out westward from Worcester, in quest of a location with the requisites mentioned; traveling on horseback, then the usual mode, and one admirably adapted to the purpose of the pioneer or explorer. He found at Springfield the mill established, probably by Eleazer Wright, prior to 1788, the germ of that which afterwards became noted under David Ames and his sons, D. and J. Ames. Avoiding competition with this well established concern, he pushed on across the Hoosac mountains until he reached the full and rapid, but cheaply controllable waters of the upper Housatonic and its branches. Here he passed his first night in Berkshire, sleeping at a small wayside inn near the border line between Dalton and Pittsfield. And pleasant dreams must have been his if they at all foreshadowed the pleasant changes which have since come to that immediate neighborhood from the manufacture of which he was there the pioneer; for very near the site on which that little hostelry stood are now clustered the fine residences of

aged 22 yrs.

his son, Zenas M., and his grandsons Zenas, Jr., and Winthrop Murray, while not far away is the handsome home of his son James B., as well as the mills which, springing from the germs which he planted, now send out lavishly products which have a national fame, as ranking with the world's best.

It is to be feared, however, that no such visions of the night cheered the lonely explorer, and that he rose in the morning to encounter such difficulties as might oppose him, sustained only by the elastic hopes of youth and a noble enthusiasm for his art—grand helpers both, and grandly to be stimulated by the scenes among which he found himself. He had reached a region of superb natural beauty, and moreover discovered a location exactly suited to his purpose as a paper-maker. In the town of Dalton, near the center of the famous Berkshire Hills, lies a sheltered valley through which flows the largest of the eastern branches of the Housatonic river, affording in its rapid descent several fine water powers. Of these Mr. Crane selected one which has since proved itself ample for far greater work than he expected ever to demand of it. This, however, was comparatively a small consideration; good water powers

were abundant enough and cheap enough in 1799. But the location was exceptionally excellent in a particular of the first importance. A prime necessity of the paper-maker is an inexhaustible supply of the purest washing water; and nowhere could this need be more fully met than here. The whole eastern slope of the valley at this point as well as much of its other surroundings, and its bottom, is geologically a purely silicious formation, out of which gush innumerable springs as free from any injurious mineral combinations as natural water is ever found. Chemists, after a careful analysis pronounce even the lakelets on the mountain tops, and the rivulets which dash down its sides, a close approximation to distilled water. The adjoining town of Pittsfield now piques itself upon receiving its water supply, from these quartz hills instead of drinking from its own lime and iron impregnated wells. In 1799, the peculiar qualities of different waters had attracted little general attention, but we may be sure that Zenas Crane did not neglect so important an element in his calculations; for he needed to go but five miles further to find equally good water-power, in a locality more convenient to his markets, and with a community then just awak-

ening to the value of manufacturing enterprise, and eager to aid any reasonable project in that direction ; but the water there was unfortunately loaded with deleterious minerals. To Mr. Crane, looking at all the circumstances with the eye of a paper-maker only, this was a fatal objection. But, even in other respects than those mentioned, the locality which he selected was not unfavorable. Dalton had then nearly one thousand inhabitants, of whom the greater part lived within its present limits ; although it has since been greatly reduced by setting off territory in the incorporation of Hinsdale, while its population and wealth have been largely increased.

The population in 1799, was almost exclusively engaged in agriculture. Among its leading citizens was William Williams, son of the distinguished Loyalist Colonel and Judge Israel Williams of Hatfield, and himself a cousin of Ephraim Williams, the founder of Williams' College, who entrusted to him chiefly the execution of his benevolent design in behalf of that institution ; Calvin Waldo, a graduate of Dartmouth, a lawyer of repute, and a descendant of Peter Waldo, the founder of the persecuted Waldensian Christians ; Dr. Perez Marsh, a graduate of Harvard, a county judge, and a man of culture and

benevolence; as well as others of like character. Whether or not the intelligence of the people was one of the inducements which led Mr. Crane to select Dalton as a residence, it was certainly afterwards very agreeable to him as a well-read and thoughtful man, fond of congenial society.

The town was very near the center of the county, which then had a population much more evenly distributed than now; while near it, on the east, was a prosperous section of Hampshire county. It might reasonably have been expected that this region, especially as it had two newspapers, would absorb a considerable portion of the product of a "one vat" mill, while the surplus would find a market at Albany, some thirty-five miles distant. The nearest mills to rival it were at Springfield, Mass., Bennington, Vt., Troy, N. Y., and Hartford, Conn.

The cost of living in Dalton, so far as necessities went, was small, and workmen had few temptations to extraordinary expenditures, except in the frequent taverns, whose seductions indeed, were sufficiently potent.

Such was the locality which, in 1799, Zenas Crane selected for the first paper mill in Massachusetts west of the Connecticut river. But, although the site was selected in the summer of

1799, the mill was not actually built until the spring of 1801, as appears from the following curious advertisement which was printed in the *Pittsfield Sun* of February 8th, in that year:

AMERICANS!
ENCOURAGE YOUR MANUFACTORIES,
AND THEY WILL IMPROVE.
LADIES, SAVE YOUR RAGS!

As the subscribers have it in contemplation to erect a paper mill in Dalton, the ensuing spring, and the business being very beneficial to the community at large, they flatter themselves that they shall meet with due encouragement. And that every woman who has the good of her country, and the interest of her own family, at heart, will patronize them by saving her rags, and sending them to their Manufactory, or to the nearest Store Keeper; for which the subscribers will give a generous price.

HENRY WISWELL,
ZENAS CRANE,
JOHN WILLARD.

WORCESTER, Feb. 8, 1801.

Advertisements of this kind, sometimes in quaint verse and often in equally quaint prose, were then, and for some years previous had been frequent in the columns of newspapers published in regions where attempts were making to establish paper mills. We have already quoted one from a Boston paper of 1769, and they were still needful in 1801. The supply of rags from all parts of the world was not only not the vast and thoroughly systematized busi-

ness it now is, but it was scarcely possible to dream of the necessity for such a system ; much less of its actual establishment. The raw materials for paper-making were sought within a limited territory around the mill. Home-made linen which filled the place in household economy that cotton cloth now does was a superior article for the paper-maker ; but unfortunately for him, however happy for the wearers, it was a fabric not soon reduced to rags ; soft as silk, it would wear like iron. Nor had the tin peddler, in his rounds, taught the New England housewife the thrift that lies in saving her rags, when made. Indeed it was not he, but the post rider, who gave the first practical lessons in this now universal frugality. In 1799 there were only five post-offices in Berkshire county, and in 1801 but seven. Probably at the latter date there were not a dozen within thirty miles of Dalton in any direction, the towns in which they were located being denominated post towns. That nearest Dalton was at Pittsfield, and there Mr. Crane, or his messenger, received his mail matter until 1812, when a post-office was established at Dalton.

The mail matter of the whole region was sent to the post towns, and no provision was made

by the government for its further distribution. But, as it was manifestly impossible for the people of the other towns to be continually running to the more favored one with the remote chance of finding a letter or newspaper, a system of "post riders" sprang up, instituted either by the carriers themselves, the publishers of newspapers, or other enterprising parties. They were a sort of private express which took the mail matter, each for his own route, from the post office and delivered it at every man's door. Naturally they became the medium of much minor traffic, and also the agents of newspaper publishers. There was little money in circulation either in coin or bank notes; barter was the ordinary mode of trade, aided by a system of mutual credits under which balances were, or were supposed to be, adjusted at stated intervals. The post rider, who ordinarily made his rounds on horseback, in winter brought out his sleigh to transport the produce in which he received his newspaper subscriptions and other dues. It did not take the post rider and the newspaper long to make the careful housewife understand that the establishment of a paper mill among them had converted a material, which had before been almost worthless into something as good

as coin of the realm, and a good deal better than most rag money of that period. The tin peddler soon followed up the lesson; and from these sources, for many years, the larger portion of the raw material of the paper manufacture was derived. Indeed, we may say, that it was almost exclusively so derived. The cramping effect of these methods was severely felt by Mr. Crane, as well as other early American paper-makers. But we are getting in advance of our story.

In the interval between his prospecting for a location in 1799 and the appearance, early in 1801, of the advertisement we have quoted, Mr. Crane was probably at Worcester, perhaps earning money to help carry out his project, and certainly securing the partners whose names appear with his own. Only one of these, however, finally took part in the enterprise; the name of Willard disappearing, and that of Daniel Gilbert taking its place for a while.

The site selected was upon a fine waterfall, near the entrance of a beautiful and romantic glen, and with an outlook toward some fertile farms. It was owned by Martin Chamberlin, a son of Joseph, one of the early settlers of the town. It seems that he was a very cautious

*Where the "Old
Beckline Mill"
now stands.*

man, and so doubtful of the practicability of establishing a paper mill there, or of the perseverance of the young projectors, that he would at first give only an oral permission "to build and try," with the promise of a sale when the thing "should be done." The deed was given December 25, 1801, conveying to Henry Wiswell, Zenas Crane and Daniel Gilbert fourteen acres, one hundred and forty-nine rods of land, together with a paper mill and appendages thereon standing, for the consideration of \$194. "The thing had been done."

The price paid was a fair one for the land and water privilege as rates then were. The honesty of Martin Chamberlin, and the confidence placed in his word were highly honorable to him, for if, as the evidence seems to show, his promise to convey was merely oral, and not a bond for a deed, it was of no effect in law, so that he could have held both the land and the buildings erected upon it.

The building erected was a one vat mill, its main part being of two stories; the upper used as a drying loft. It had a capacity or "day's work" of twenty posts. A post is one hundred and twenty-five sheets of paper.

The sizes made at this mill for writing paper

were foolscap and folio—the latter being afterwards cut into letter sizes by hand. The size and form of the book and news paper were adapted to the requirements of customers. When the mill was started there were two weekly papers of moderate size in the county; the *Sun* printed at Pittsfield and the *Western Star* at Stockbridge. The *Sun* was intensely Democratic in politics, which were then conducted with a bitterness since unknown, and Hon. Phineas Allen, its editor and publisher, was a strong partisan, but he was a warm friend of Mr. Crane and his enterprise, and purchased much of his supply of paper from him. Notwithstanding political differences the personal friendship of Mr. Allen and Mr. Crane continued through life. When the demand for either writing or printing paper in Berkshire was fully supplied a convenient and generally a ready market was found at Albany, when the country was not flooded with foreign goods.

The skilled workmen employed were an engineer at three dollars per week, a vatman and a coucher at three dollars and a half each, without board; one additional workman, and two girls at at seventy-five cents a week each, and a lay-boy at sixty cents, all being boarded. What Mr.

Crane received as Superintendent and general manager we do not know, but a few years later his partners allowed him nine dollars a week.

The prospecting journey of Zenas Crane in 1799 was almost exactly coincident with the experiments in France and Scotland, which led to the invention of the Fourdrinier paper-making machine and the introduction of chloride of lime in bleaching; but it was several years before those improvements were perfected and generally adopted in Europe; many before they were used commonly in America. Rags received what bleaching they had, before they became rags, and the quality of the paper depended very much upon the care with which they were sorted, which often in hasty work was little enough. Dyed rags could not be used at all except in wrapping papers, and possibly in some cases where tints were required. Blue rags dyed with indigo were treasured up to be made into wrappers for manufactured tobacco, the dealers in which rejected all papers dyed in the making, probably as affecting the flavor of the weed.

Even when the rags were well sorted, much depended upon the skill of the workman—a very uncertain quantity. Paper-makers were much

given in those days to "tramping." They came along, one by one, seeking a job, which was given them if they were needed. If not they got supper, lodging and breakfast, and a quire of broken paper, for which they made such return as they could, and then sent on their way, after a parting dram of spirits—for this was long before the beginning of the temperance reformation. If there was work for them, they stayed while it lasted, or until the spirit of restlessness took them away. Many of them were English or Scotch, and the drinking habit was almost universal. Of course there was great diversity in their skill, and also in their capacity for exercising it at different times. All this was of course, trying and troublesome to the manager of the mill. He was also subject to much anxiety on account of the extremely variable character of his markets, which was the more troublesome as it took weeks to perform the work which improved processes now render it possible to do in hours.

Under these advantages and difficulties incident to the times, Mr. Crane conducted the mill since known as "The Old Berkshire," until in 1807, he sold his undivided third part to his partner, Wiswell. He then betook himself to

mercantile business in the eastern part of the town, and conducted it with success until 1810, gaining also no little business knowledge and experience, which afterwards came in good play. *near Litchfield corner.*

While thus employed, he married, Nov. 30, 1809, Miss Lucinda, daughter of Gaius and Lucretia [Babcock] Brewer of Wilbraham in Hampden County, showing in this the same excellent judgment which governed him in all other important acts of his life. In a life long companionship, she proved well fitted to be the encourager and helper of one burdened with such cares and labors as fell to the lot of a pioneer manufacturer.

In 1806 the second paper mill in Berkshire was built, at Lee, by Samuel Church, and in 1809 a third was built, at Dalton, by Joseph Chamberlin, upon land owned by Martin Chamberlin, who retained his old cautious habits, and, not until "after the thing was done," sold to David Carson, Joseph Chamberlin and Henry Wiswell, thirteen acres and seventy-two rods of land with the *new* mill thereon standing. The water privilege was equally good with that of the old one and located about an eighth of a mile south of it. It was started by the firm of Carson, Chamberlin & Wiswell in the fall of 1809, David

Carson who had come to Dalton that year and been engaged in the first mill during the month of August, being the chief manager. David Carson reached Dalton under similar circumstances to Mr. Crane, and after a long and prosperous career "died Sept. 20, 1858, aged 75 years," as his monument in the Dalton cemetery shows. Thus he was a lad of sixteen when Mr. Crane first came to Dalton. In the year 1812, he purchased an interest in the first, or Old Berkshire mill of which in 1816 he became sole owner. It was conducted with eminent success by himself and his sons Thomas G., and William W., until the year 1867, when it was sold to a company. In 1872, it was burned and rebuilt on a larger scale, as one of the most complete mills in the country. In 1884 it is operated by the Carson & Brown Co., in which the owners are John D. Carson, a grandson of David, Zenas Crane, Jr., a grandson of Zenas, the pioneer, who first selected and occupied the site, Charles O. Brown, president of the company, who was initiated into the mysteries of the paper-makers' craft, in the "Old Red Mill," and William W. Carson of Newburg, N. Y.

In order to make our account of the Old Berkshire mill consecutive, we have interrupted

where the large
brick mill now
stands 1926
the "Pioneer Mill"

the main story of Mr. Crane's life, to which we now return. On the sixth of April 1810, he bought David Carson's interest in the "new mill" which subsequently became famous as the "Old Red Mill," and it was run for a while by the firm of Crane, Wiswell, Chamberlin and Cole; and afterwards by Crane, Chamberlin and Cole, until, in 1822, Mr. Crane, who had from the date of his purchase been superintendent and chief manager, became sole proprietor.

During all this time, and indeed as long as his business life lasted, Mr. Crane had to encounter in a greater or less degree the obstacles and annoyances which inevitably beset the path of early manufacturing enterprise in America; several of which we have mentioned. Some of the more petty, but also the more vexatious, of these diminished as the morals and manners of the country improved, and his own position became more assured; but the more formidable continued to impede his progress to the last. Foreign competition especially was discouraging to effort and outlay. This was but little checked beneficially by fluctuating tariff, although it was in a degree counterbalanced by increased home consumption; but what was more exasperating

was the absurd preference of the silly public for European goods over American fabrics of equal and often much superior merit. It was long before good American writing papers could be sold to advantage, except with the imprint of French or English houses. It is said that this ridiculous and unpatriotic public prejudice was shrewdly overcome by some spirited American manufacturers, who gratified it by sending the inferior products of their mills to market under the names of French firms in gorgeous Parisian wrappers printed in Pittsfield, while they persistently placed their own imprints upon their best goods. The equality of American paper with any of foreign make has now become so fully established and acknowledged that this story has passed into tradition; but the state of things which it indicates and which undoubtedly existed until after the death of Zenas Crane was exceedingly discouraging to honorable and ambitious effort.

Nevertheless such effort he made from pure devotion to his art, no country paper-maker could then look for wide-spread fame from his best success. Mr. Crane himself could not have anticipated the honors which his life work has gained for his name, not only among those of

his own craft, but from the general public. In what he did his motives were simply love of his trade, a desire to build up in it a business which he might bequeath to his children, winning for himself and them an honorable living and a respectable position in the community and the Commonwealth.

These, to be sure, were motives sufficient to inspire him with a desire to do even more than was possible under the circumstances in which he was placed. Dalton was remote from the great business centres of the country, and from the avenues of travel which led to them until the year 1842, (three years before Mr. Crane died,) the Boston & Albany railroad, which passes through it, was opened. Before that date the county of Berkshire was, as compared with what it now is, a secluded nook, little moved by the mercurial influences which drive on the great world-centres, instead of responding to them, as it now does, in almost equal measure with the metropolis. The advance of this county in manufactures, although moderate, was however, decided; and that it was not more rapid was due to languid markets and the slow accumulation of capital rather than to lack of apprehension of what was being done elsewhere in their respec-

tive arts. Mr. Crane, in particular, who was noted for making books his constant companions, and as a constant reader of whatever of value he could procure, must have been well aware of the Fourdrinier inventions for paper machinery, as well as the discoveries of Scheele and Berthollet regarding chlorine, the preparation of chloride of lime, by Tennent, and its subsequent use in bleaching. But the first Fourdrinier machines made in America were as late as 1835, and their cost was three times as great as that of a complete mill of the old pattern. They did not reach Berkshire until 1848. In the meantime Mr. Crane in 1831, placed in his mill a very satisfactory cylinder paper-making machine, invented and patented by John Ames of Springfield, and in 1834 he added the cylinder dryers. Early in the century he adopted the use of chloride of lime in bleaching. Other minor improvements in the methods of manufacture were adopted from time to time.

In his management Mr. Crane had been discreet as well as enterprising and liberal; economical and thrifty without the slightest taint or suspicion of dishonor. In his intercourse with his employes he was kindly, open-hearted and open-handed, but was esteemed somewhat re-

served, although probably not more so than is now the custom with the heads of manufacturing establishments. It is certain that some of his employes, who have attained high standing in business and social life, remember him not only with the greatest esteem, but with marked gratitude and affection. From one of his early apprentices, William Renne, an enterprising citizen of Pittsfield, we gather much of this.

The career of Zenas Crane as a successful paper-maker, building up a business from the smallest beginnings, although not a rare case, is in itself worthy of note; but the honors due to the memory of a pioneer are to be gauged not so much by what he himself accomplished directly, as by the achievements of those who have followed in the path which he discovered and marked out. Those of Mr. Crane are to be measured somewhat by the dimensions which the paper manufacture has attained in the region where it was unknown before he introduced it, and wherever it has extended from that region. The county of Berkshire covers but a small part of that region, but within its borders alone there are now twenty-five paper-making establishments, mostly on a large scale, employing an aggregate capital of about three million dollars and send-

ing out an annual product of the value of over three and a-half millions.

This is a very respectable, not to say splendid, outgrowth from the little one vat mill planted painfully on the banks of the Housatonic in 1801, whose chief capital was the brains of its chief manager, and whose annual product was of extremely variable and uncertain value, depending to a large extent upon circumstances entirely beyond his control.

We do not mean to claim that all this vast expansion of the paper-making business in Berkshire in eighty-four years is the direct outgrowth of Zenas Crane's pioneership, although it cannot be denied that a very large portion of it is so, as well as a wide extension of intelligent and profitable paper manufacture elsewhere. Still a not very indirect result of the earliest paper mill in Berkshire, all the later ones certainly are.

Far be it from us to depreciate, in the slightest degree, the intellect and skill, inherited or obtained by culture and study, which in late years have built up so grandly, and which so now wisely govern, the manufactures of Berkshire County. We know well what cool and shrewd judgment, what perfect intimacy with all that pertains to his business, from general principles to the most

minute details, and what forbearing patience are needed to make a permanently successful manufacturer of any kind here or elsewhere. But we know also how much depends upon the original plant. The authority of Holy Writ was not required to teach us that, though "we plant but a bare seed it may chance of wheat or some other grain, God giveth it a body as it pleases Him," nor that it always does please Him to "give to each seed a body of its own;" that men reap what they sow. And the same law applies to all the works of men. It pleases God, as all history tells us, that as the sowing is so the harvest shall be. Without that law utter confusion and chaos would reign both in physics and in morals. Its operation is everywhere manifest in the history of our whole country, where the children reap still abundantly what the fathers sowed, notwithstanding the multitudinous intermingling in later years, of devil-spread tares.

To apply the general principle to this particular case, the manufactures of Berkshire afford a remarkable exemplification of the rule. A large proportion of them have descended in the same families through two or three generations, each of which has preserved and added to whatever of skill or capital it received from that which

preceded it. And even where this has not been the case as to families, it is from the seed painfully planted and painfully nursed in certain localities, from generation to generation, that those localities reap the rich harvest of the present. Inasmuch as the seed was good, it was worth all the painstaking which it cost to make the crops rich and perennial.

The special local development of the original "plant," and its influence upon the fortunes of families and communities, are nowhere more conspicuously displayed than in the manufactures of Berkshire. We cannot go into the full history of that development. To do that faithfully, with just and impartial credit to all who have given capital, brains and energy to advance it, would require long and laborious research to ascertain the exact truth, and a volume of no small dimensions to print it. But we know enough of the story, as all Berkshire does, or might on little inquiry, to be well assured that the present great paper industry of the county is the natural and legitimate outgrowth of the pioneership of Zenas Crane.

It is true that if he had not permanently established the business, and drawn attention to the special facilities for the paper manufacture

which the town and county afforded, others might have done so, as they did introduce into the county the cotton and woolen manufactures. But, so far as paper-making is concerned, nobody came to Berkshire to do anything of the kind for five years after Mr. Crane's mill was in operation, nor to Dalton for eight years; while there is almost an absolute certainty that the paper-makers who came in those years were induced to do so by his pioneering. That was the germ from which the paper-making industry of Berkshire indisputably sprang. Whether, if that had been blighted before it came to fruition, the same great interests might have grown up from a later planting, as a late frost sometimes compels the farmer to replant his corn, is immaterial. No such blight occurred. Whittier tells us that

"Of all sad words of voice or pen,
The saddest are these, 'It might have been.'"

True as this may be, "It might *not* have been" are words of significance and often of sadness. In this case, however, neither phrase would have either significance or sadness, for the plain reason that what might have been was cut off and anteceded by what actually was, and in a manner leaving no change to be desired. The same story cannot have two beginnings.

If the influence of Mr. Crane's early labors had been confined entirely to his own descendants, the result would still be notable. It would be of striking interest barely to contrast the little wooden mill and the rude appliances slowly obtained in 1801 with the costly buildings and marvellous automatic machinery which have appeared as if by magic at the call of the wealth and skill which had their origin in that simple early home. But we must content ourselves with the briefest possible summary.

In the year 1842 Mr. Crane transferred his interest in the Old Red Mill and the business in general to his eldest sons, Zenas Marshall and James Brewer, who were already his partners. In the same year, the opening of the railroad between Boston and Albany through Berkshire gave them facilities for reaching not only the city, but some of the local markets, the lack of which had embarrassed their father. These increased facilities stimulated all the industries of the county and inspired all its business men with new courage and ambition. Under this and other favoring auspices, the Messrs. Crane continued steadily and judiciously to increase the capacity of the Old Red Mill, and improve the quality of its work, until it was burned in the

fall of 1870. The loss, including building, machinery, stock, etc., was total. The building had long been familiar to the people of the county and to its habitual visitors, and is missed by them from its picturesque view. There was no insurance upon any part of the loss by the fire, but the mill was immediately rebuilt of stone, upon a larger scale, and fitted with the best made machinery then to be obtained, which has been bettered as often as new inventions and improvements have given opportunity. It is now called "The Pioneer Mill," in honor of the pioneer, Zenas Crane, although the "Old Berkshire" occupies the site which he first built upon.

Following the tendency of the times in all manufactures, or rather considerably in advance of them, the firm of Crane & Co. gradually came to devote themselves to specialties. They have now long been known as the bank note paper-makers of this country. They supply not only a large part of the general market, but our own and several foreign governments.

In 1879 they were awarded the contract, which they still hold, for supplying the United States government with all the paper which is required for national bank bills, United States bonds, certificates and treasury notes. In order to

properly fill this contract they purchased the fine brick mill which had been built at Coltsville. a few years before by Thomas Colt. This village is in Pittsfield, but the mill is very near the Dalton line, and but a short distance from Cranesville, the village in Dalton, composed chiefly of the residences, mills, and other buildings of the Crane family in its different branches. It is not far from the site upon which stood the little rural inn where the first Zenas Crane passed his first night in Berkshire. This is popularly called "The Government Mill," it being devoted to the manufacture of paper for the national government, whose flag constantly floats before it, and by whose officers it is constantly watched and guarded to prevent robbery of the peculiar distinctive paper which is made in it. For the same reason, several of its employes are detailed from the Treasury department at Washington. It is unnecessary to say that the work done here has the most unqualified approval of the Department. There has not been a suspicion of any irregularity upon the part of even an employe. Winthrop Murray, the youngest son of Z. M. Crane, is the immediate manager of the business. The Pioneer Mill makes a considerable quantity of parchment and bond papers, but its

chief product is bank note paper. Of this, setting aside entirely what they make under contract at the Government Mill, for the United States, the Messrs. Crane, at the Pioneer Mill alone, probably send out more than any other firm in the world of the paper on which the world's paper circulating medium is printed. And this is simply because by long experience and patiently acquired skill, they have been able to produce an article which possesses in the highest degree the elements required for banking purposes; great strength of texture and a surface perfectly fitted for writing and engraving. This is something quite different from the varied and perplexing market which was offered Zenas Crane in the earlier years of his enterprise; but it is only what the harvest is to the seed.

In connection with the Crane bank note manufacture there is a curious incident, which is worth telling for the instruction which it carries. In the year 1846, Zenas Marshall Crane, now the senior member of the Crane paper-making family was a young man, and much inclined to inventing methods of improving and raising the art. Among other things, it occurred to him at that time that the introduction into the fiber of silk threads, representing the denomination of bills by their

number, would prevent counterfeiting by raising the amount from a lower to a higher figure. One, two and three dollar bills were then issued by all State banks, which were all the banks there then were. The opinions of conservative banking men discouraged Mr. Crane so that he did not apply for a patent upon this valuable invention. Nearly twenty years afterwards, conservatism having taken another and more practical form, the National Government found it necessary to establish a national paper currency. Then the practical men at the head of the financial affairs of the nation deemed it expedient to adopt essentially the plan devised by Mr. Crane to prevent the counterfeiting of its paper. When this was done, an Englishman appeared at Washington with a claim as patentee. It fortunately happened, however, that Mr. Crane's idea had, long before the date of this patent, been adopted by a few American banks, among them being the Mahaiwe of Great Barrington, the Bay State of Lawrence, and the Hamilton of Boston. These institutions had preserved, and probably still hold, copies of their issues upon the Crane paper, which were forwarded to Washington, and saved the Government from the payment to a foreign party of a royalty

probably quite equal in amount to any profit which Crane & Co. have ever received from their contract for furnishing national bank paper. Among the minor points in the history of the national banking system, this incident seems worth preserving.

About midway between the site of the Old Red Mill, now occupied by the Pioneer Mill of Crane & Co., and the Government Mill, is a good water power, upon which a stone factory was erected in 1836 for the manufacture of woolen goods. The company which built it sank under the financial storms which commenced in the succeeding year, and the building remained unoccupied until 1850, when, under a lease, it was converted by the firm of Crane & Wilson into the Bay State paper mill, the active partners in the firm being Seymour Crane, the youngest son of the pioneer, and James Wilson, a skilful workman, who learned his trade with him, becoming his apprentice in 1817. The Bay State mill made buff and other writing papers, the buff being a favorite with Thurlow Weed, the New York editor and politician, and with others, who conceived that the constant use of white paper is injurious to the eye.

In 1865, this property was rented by Zenas

Crane, Jr., the eldest son of Z. M. Crane, who afterwards bought up all the interests in the property which had arisen in the various transfers. It was run by him successfully until it was burned, May 15, 1877, and was immediately rebuilt on a larger scale by the new firm of Zenas Crane, Jr. & Brother, the junior partner being Winthrop Murray Crane. This business is managed by the senior partner, and is devoted to the manufacture of Ladies' fine stationery.

If it were not considered out of place here, we could fill many interesting pages with the details of the present Crane mills, (located in the same place as in 1801,) and their noted products. It is, however, proper to speak of them thus briefly, in order to show the good effect and result of a wise beginning. But for the sound judgment exercised by the pioneer in establishing the business, where so many requisites for superior products were found, the present success and fame of his descendants might not have been achieved.

In this we would not detract from the labors of the present generation, whose enterprise and skill have not only maintained but improved and enlarged the business to meet the demands of progress.

But the influence of Zenas Crane upon his own descendants has extended beyond Berkshire county. In 1847, his third son, Lindley Murray Crane established a mill at Ballston Spa, N. Y., where he resided until his death, in 1879. His grandsons also, Robert B. and James A., sons of James B. Crane, under the firm name of Crane Brothers, have built up paper works at Westfield, in Hampden county, where they manufacture ledger and linen papers, baskets, etc. Surely, by pushing the paper manufacture into new varieties and new localities, the descendants of Zenas Crane have proved that the pioneer spirit has not deserted the family. They honor their ancestor by following in his footsteps, and pushing on where he only pointed the way. And still they all look back with reverence and pride to that little mill with its imperfect appliances and its limited and almost local market.

Mr. Crane was something more than a mere paper-maker. Like every man who succeeds in a great business, he necessarily gave to it by far the larger portion of his time and thought. But his devotion was not such as to narrow his mind; it was far from absorbing all his energies or filling his whole heart. He recognized to the full all his family, social, religious and political duties,

and performed them like a kindly and wise man, a good husband, father and citizen.

The quality of wisdom was sharply needful to a kindly and genial nature under the social customs which prevailed around him during his younger and middle life. Society was very jovial in Berkshire when he took part in it, and the class of men with whom he was brought into the most intimate association, however high their standing in the community, were no more free from its frailties than were others. In his intercourse with them he was no ascetic, nor did he affect any ostentatious superiority of virtue; but a wise and sensitive self-respect kept him far within the limits of indulgence to which he might then have ventured with little fear of reproach except from his own heart, and he thus escaped dangers upon which not a few of those in like position with himself made shipwreck of life, health or fortune, if not of all three. Doubtless, the sources of pleasure which he found in books helped to render more easy this wholesome self-restraint, but it was in no small degree due to a delicate, innate sense of propriety and the dignity of manhood, which shrank from degrading indulgence or coarse pleasures.

Akin to this feeling was a keen susceptibility

in regard to his personal reputation which distinguished him and rendered him acutely alive to even the slightest aspersion of his character. A gentleman who, when a youth, resided in Mr. Crane's family, tells us an anecdote illustrative of this trait. One evening he came home more excited than Mrs. Crane or our informant ever saw him, before or afterwards; for he was habitually a calm man. Now, he could neither eat nor rest. He explained that a neighbor, who was a strong political opponent—a harsh and rude man, but of some local influence—had been circulating some false reports about him, which he was determined not to let pass. His wife begged him to wait until he had slept, or at least until he had taken supper. He could do neither until the matter was settled, and he set out to seek the offender. In a few hours—anxious ones, no doubt, at home—he returned with a full written retraction, or denial, of the calumnies, and his usual quiet manner completely restored. But our informant avers that no business or other troubles ever seemed to disturb him so much as these probably not very severe stories.

In politics Mr. Crane belonged first to the Federal and then to the Whig party, organizations more scrupulous than any others which the

country has known, as to the character of the men whom they elevated to office; for they regarded office as a genuine elevation. By the support of these parties Mr. Crane was several times chosen to the State Legislature, beginning in 1811, and to the Executive Council, under Gov. Edward Everett, in 1836 and 1837. There were at that time nine Councillors annually elected by the General Court. The last chosen from Berkshire before Mr. Crane was Hon. Henry Hubbard, of Pittsfield, and his immediate successors were Hon. Henry Shaw, of Lanesboro, and Hon. Edward A. Newton, of Pittsfield, all of them his warm personal as well as political friends. In his place as Councillor and in the House of Representatives, his practical knowledge, extensive general information and pure principles made him of peculiar value, and the same qualities distinguished him in the various town offices which he held from time to time.

It is of interest to know in this connection that Mr. Crane's son, Zenas Marshall, who became a leading member of the Free Soil party in 1848, and joined the Republican party in the county upon its organization, was chosen one of the Senators from Berkshire in 1856 and 1857, and Executive Councillor in 1862 and 1863, with

Gov. Andrew, and that his son, Zenas, Jr., after being a member of the State House of Representatives, was elected in November, 1884, Executive Councillor for 1885, that being his second year with Gov. Robinson, and serving in the same Council Chamber that his grandfather did fifty years before. There are eight Councillors now in the State, and the eighth district now extends as far east as Amherst and Ware.

The Crane history thus furnishes us an instance, rare in this country of constant business and political changes, of a family all whose members for three generations have adhered strictly and generally successfully to one manufacture, and mostly in the same town; while each generation has furnished a member of the same Christian name to the Executive Council of the State. Some peculiar and substantial family traits are required to account for this. Such things do not come by chance.

We have endeavored in this brief sketch to relate accurately the history of the first paper-maker in Berkshire, and to give a correct estimate of his character, and the value of his life-work to the community. In order to do the last, it has been necessary to go somewhat beyond the events of his own life. With regard to his

biography proper, we have sought for and used conscientiously all the testimony we could find in written or printed matter, or gather from the lips of those who knew him well in life; but very little of it from his own descendants. And it is a fact as worthy of note as any in the sketch, that with the closest scrutiny and in the report of all classes of people, we have found nothing which his most sensitive friend could wish to suppress or conceal. He was surely a citizen to be remembered with gratitude by the people of Dalton and Berkshire, and with honor by all.

Mr. Crane died June 29, 1845, at the age of 68. His widow survived him until May 2, 1872, when she died, having attained the ripe age of 84 years.



NOTES.

I. Taking counsel from the wisdom of Scott's "Richard Monoplies," the writer of these memoirs prefers to discover and call attention to his own errors, although he is conscious that if he did not some good-natured critical friend would be sure to do it for him, and more sharply. Therefore in carefully reading the text since it was in type he recognizes that he was inadvertently led into a sadly untenable supposition in regard to the British soldier who gave his aid in reviving the paper mill at Milton. Inasmuch as Wolfe was killed in September, 1759, this soldier who was doing such good service at Boston, in 1760, could hardly have died with him. In any case he must have belonged to the army of Lord Amherst and not that of General Wolfe, which sailed directly from England for Quebec touching at Louisbourg. Amherst's forces did not reach Canada until the summer of 1760, and if the date of the incident at Milton is correctly given in Munsell's "Chronology of Paper Making," the service must have been performed in the winter or early spring of that year by a member of some regiment detained at Boston until the later spring enabled it to march.

II. I have also learned since the earlier portions of the main text was printed, that Zenas Crane was not only the pioneer of "hand paper" making in Massachusetts, west of the Connecticut river, but a member, (and necessarily from his experience an influential one,) of the pioneer firm in "machine made" paper-making; that which owning the Thatcher Mill at Lee, about the year 1826, placed in it the first paper-making machinery introduced in that section. This fact is of interest as showing that the spirit which actuated Mr. Crane at the first was not accidental and transient but innate and permanent.



GENEALOGY.

Henry Crane came from England to the present Milton, (then Dorchester,) Massachusetts, in the year 1648 or 1649. His second son was Stephen, who married, July 2nd, 1676, Mary Denison. The second son of this Stephen and Mary was Benjamin, born December 17th, 1692, in Braintree. This Benjamin married, December 27th, 1722, Abigail Houghton and another Stephen was born to them, May 19th, 1734, who was their fifth son. This Stephen was married in 1762 to Susannah Babcock, and these last were the parents of Zenas Crane the subject of this memoir, who was born in Canton, Mass., May 9th, 1777, and died in Dalton, June 29th, 1845.

The grave of Henry Crane can be found at Prince's Pass, in the old cemetery adjoining the Court House or City Hall.





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